

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Larsen-Orta v. Contra Costa County Human Services Department

Larsen-Orta · No. 4:25-cv-02027-KAW · Decided March 12, 2025

SUMMARY

The court grants Plaintiff Ragni Larsen-Orta's application to proceed in forma pauperis but recommends dismissal of the complaint without prejudice for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. The court concludes that the complaint improperly seeks federal review of a California Department of Health Care Services administrative decision and that alleging violations of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments does not establish federal jurisdiction.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kewe A. [surname unclear in source OCR]
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	March 12, 2025
DOCKET	4:25-cv-02027-KAW
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a civil action and an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The magistrate judge granted the in forma pauperis application and issued a report and recommendation that the complaint be dismissed without prejudice for lack of subject matter jurisdiction.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed the complaint sua sponte for subject matter jurisdiction and under the mandatory screening requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- judicial review of agency action
- administrative law
- civil procedure
- constitutional law

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint satisfied the in forma pauperis screening requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
2. Whether the federal district court had subject matter jurisdiction over what was effectively an appeal of a California state administrative decision.
3. Whether the complaint could be amended to establish a basis for federal subject matter jurisdiction.

HOLDINGS

1. A complaint may be dismissed as frivolous during screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) when the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction.
2. The complaint did not establish federal subject matter jurisdiction because an alleged violation of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments did not transform the action into a proper federal case or confer jurisdiction over a de facto appeal of a state administrative decision.
3. The complaint could not be amended to sufficiently allege a basis for federal subject matter jurisdiction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Alleging amorphous violations of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments does not confer subject matter jurisdiction over a de facto appeal of a state administrative decision” (at 2)

“The complaint is insufficient to satisfy Section 1915 review and that it cannot be amended to sufficiently allege a basis for federal subject matter jurisdiction.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that an unfavorable decision by the California Department of Health Care Services would result in a deprivation of medical care beginning March 1, 2025. DHCS denied her request for rehearing in a February 13, 2025 letter and advised her that she could seek judicial review by filing a petition in California Superior Court. Plaintiff instead filed in federal district court and alleged amorphous violations of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On February 26, 2025, Ragni Larsen-Orta filed the action and an in forma pauperis application. The court granted the application, reassigned the case to a district judge, and recommended dismissal without prejudice after screening the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). The recommendation was subject to objections within 14 days under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 72(b), and N.D. Civil Local Rule 72-3.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Castillo v. Marshall, 207 F.3d 15, 15 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Pratt v. Sumner, 807 F.2d 817, 819 (9th Cir. 1987)
- Henderson ex rel. Henderson v. Shinseki, 562 U.S. 428, 434 (2011)
- Valdez v. Allstate Ins. Co., 372 F.3d 1115, 1116 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Hansen v. Blue Cross of Cal., 891 F.2d 1384, 1386 (9th Cir. 1989)
- IBEW Local 595 Trust Funds v. ACS Controls Corp., No. C-10-5568, 2011 WL 1496056, at *3 (N.D. Cal. Apr. 20, 2011)

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